

POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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Time has shown that he is both wise and humane. In our time it may be shrewdly forecast that no man will exhibit dimensions of permanent greatness equal to those of Mussolini.* The volume thus heralded by American trumpets and published in 1928 differs from *Mein Kampf* in its brevity and its lack of ideological background. The first time the Ambassador saw him, shortly before the march on Rome, he inquired about his visitor's programme. "Work and discipline" was the unhesitating reply. There is no word about race or the Jews, nothing about a new gospel for mankind. It is more of a narrative and less of an academic discourse: for Mussolini's philosophy we must turn to his famous article on Fascism contributed to the Italian Encyclopedia. It is in fact far less interesting both as a book and as a revelation of personality, and it enjoyed very limited success. Dictated in the brief intervals of a busy ruler's life, it is a second-rate performance in comparison with Hitler's maturely considered and frequently revised manifesto. Yet there are striking similarities. There is the same picture of the ignominious collapse of democracy, of the craving of a great people for a firm hand at the helm, of the emergence of a superman at the psychological moment, the same brazen self-confidences the same shrill invective against all who stood in his way. No political apologia exudes a more childish conviction of infallibility.

The larger half of the volume is devoted to the years of apprenticeship and the struggle for power. How much is discreetly omitted in these seemingly artless pages, how much is transformed, we may learn from Megaro's documented biography. No autobiography, however, wholly fails to reveal its author's personality, and Mussolini has a dramatic story to

tell. Ever a fighter he knew hunger and
 imprisonment; he
 was expelled from the Socialist party; he fought
 duels; he
 learned to fly; he was badly wounded in the war.
 He pays
 tributes to his parents, his wife, " a wise and
 excellent woman,"
 and his brother Arnaldo; but he declares that
 no political
 friends ever had the slightest influence on him.
 Dictators are
 always lonely men. " I found the crown lying in
 the mud,"
 remarked Napoleon ; " I picked it up and put it
 on my head."
 According to Mussolini there was no rival for
 the first pkce
 when he and his Blackshirts marched on Rome.
 " Nobody
 wanted the responsibility of power." D'Annunzio
 is hailed as a
 forerunner of the national revival, but he had
 few followers.
 f< The Fascist! are the aristocracy of Italy."
 Fascism was an